

## 20th Legislative District

# 2008 Session Review

May 2008



**Rep. Gary Alexander**

Dear friends and neighbors,

The 60-day 2008 legislative session has come to an end. Results were mixed, but among the bright spots was our successful push to provide help for victims of the December floods. The effort offered evidence of how things can be accomplished in Olympia when politics takes a back seat to a commitment to get something done.

The session produced less successful results on other issues important to you and your family. This newsletter offers a brief overview of the Legislature's work this year.

Please contact us if you have questions or ideas about the workings of your state government. As always, it is a privilege to work in Olympia on behalf of our communities. Thank you for the honor of serving as your state representatives.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Rep. Gary Alexander and Rep. Richard DeBolt in blue ink.



**Rep. Richard DeBolt**

### *How can we help?*

We never stop serving as your representatives. If you have questions or need assistance in your dealings with state government, do not hesitate to contact us. We are glad to help.

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# • Reps. Alexander and DeBolt •

## ***Hits and misses of the 2008 session Little progress made on five key issues for families***

There were five key areas where we believed lawmakers needed bold ideas and leadership to address challenges facing Washington families. Unfortunately, the 2008 session did not produce the results needed to respond to these overriding issues:

### ***✓ Giving patients control of their health care and making coverage more affordable***

Republicans want coverage for everyone:

- Coverage that you own, not the government
- Coverage you won't lose when you change jobs
- Coverage that meets your needs
- Coverage that you and/or your employer can afford

The Legislature has conducted 16 studies on health care since 2005, and yet we still do not have the reforms in place to reduce health care costs and provide affordable coverage for families.

Republicans offered a proposal that would provide affordable, streamlined health plans especially for young adults, who make up the largest share of the uninsured. It would also provide tax incentives and more choices for employers to buy health coverage for themselves and their employees.

### ***✓ Achieving high standards in our schools and developing a fair and responsible method of supporting education***



Republicans support:

- Funding education first
- Funding the fundamentals

Instead of forcing schools to rely on local levies through higher property taxes, we believe the state should provide sufficient and equitable funding for our children's education. We want to take politics out of education by funding education first, so we're not pitting schools against other budget needs.

We also believe the state must do a better job of funding the fundamentals, such as books, supplies, buses, and special education.

Above all, we must achieve high standards and give schools the tools they need to prepare every child for success.



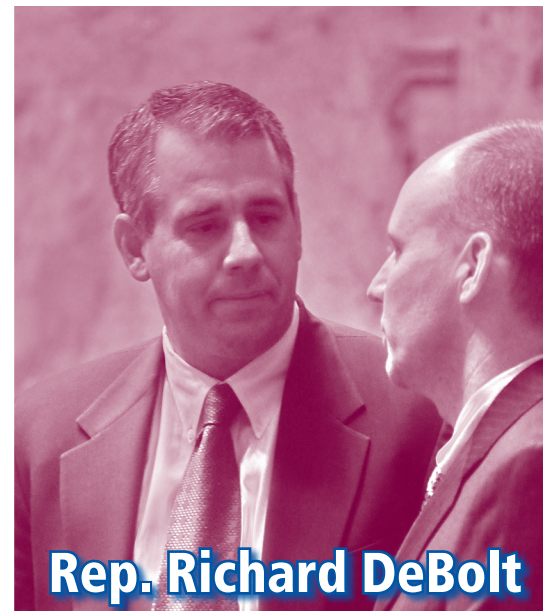
### ***✓ Protecting taxpayers from a looming \$2.4 billion budget shortfall next year***

Budget facts:

- The state's biennial budget grew from zero to \$25 billion in 105 years
- It grew from \$25 billion to \$33.7 billion in the last four years
- State spending is increasing 16.2 percent annually, while state revenue is only increasing by 7.3 percent

Our state does not have a revenue problem, it has a spending problem. And without controlling spending, it can't control taxes. We want a more responsible budget approach, guided by the following principles:

- Truth in budgeting – Shed light on the budget process with open decision making and without using budget maneuvers to hide expenditures
- Priorities of government – Use the process employed in 2002 to set clear priorities and force government to live within its means
- Constitutional spending limit – Enact a true spending limit that allows for reasonable growth and flexibility to respond to true emergencies
- Protect taxpayers – Recognize that every dollar government spends was taken from someone who earned it



**Rep. Richard DeBolt**

### ***✓ Delivering transportation projects on time and on budget, as promised to voters***

We support the following reforms to achieve the best results for our transportation tax dollars:

- Streamline permitting
- Use of private sector resources on major projects
- Leadership to keep projects on time and on budget

Never before has our state faced so many challenges without solutions. Despite record spending, our state has no plan to relieve congestion or complete major transportation projects. Meanwhile, cost overruns and delays on roads and ferries are eating up money that had been promised for local road projects.

Since 2007, only 2 percent of new spending on transportation has been set aside for new projects. The rest – nearly \$3 billion – is being used simply to cover cost overruns and revenue shortfalls on existing projects.

We can do better. With leadership and accountability, we can develop more effective solutions for transportation and honor promises made to taxpayers.



**Rep. Gary Alexander**

## ***Unfinished Business***



The following are important decisions and challenges facing our state that were ignored or punted into next year:

- ➡ Controlling government spending
- ➡ Providing property tax relief
- ➡ Making meaningful reforms to the WASL
- ➡ Providing equitable funding for public schools
- ➡ Creating health care solutions, not studies
- ➡ Enacting tougher penalties for sex offenders
- ➡ Keeping promises on funded road projects

### ***✓ Putting families before felons by keeping track of sex offenders and addressing gang-related crimes***

- There are 20,000 sex offenders in Washington
- 1,434 have failed to register with authorities and the state does not know where they are

We continue to push for better monitoring of sex offenders, to protect children such as Zina Linnik, the 12-year-old Tacoma girl who was abducted and murdered by a known sex offender. Authorities still lack the tools to adequately monitor sex offenders living in our communities. That's why we support the following reforms:

- Tougher penalties for sex offenders who fail to register

- GPS monitoring for the most dangerous offenders
- Disclosure of sex offenders' e-mail addresses and Web sites
- Creating a DNA database of all sex offenders
- Stronger penalties for sex offenders who violate the law while under community supervision

Among the session's key accomplishments was the progress made on reforms to help communities get control over gang-related crimes.

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# 2008 Session Review

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## ***Flood protection update***

### ***Community wins local control of future flood planning***



The voices of citizens in our flood-ravaged communities helped us win the debate over future flood mitigation in the Chehalis River Basin. House Bill 3375, prime sponsored by Rep. Alexander, will provide \$50 million and create a locally driven process for developing flood prevention projects.

Our communities stepped up and demonstrated resolve to protect families in all areas affected by

flooding. A good deal of credit goes to local leaders, flood victims and volunteers, who worked to educate lawmakers and the governor about the need to make local citizens an integral part of the planning process for preventing future flooding.

We couldn't be more proud of our communities for the way the people responded to the plight of their neighbors and friends, and the manner in which they have shown leadership on this issue before the Legislature.

## ***Flood legislation***

### ***Wins . . .***

- **House Bill 2525** – Makes it easier for landowners to get emergency approval to remove debris, restore banks and protect property where chronic flood danger exists
- **House Bill 3375/3374** – Provides \$50 million for flood prevention and requires a local flood control authority to participate in the development of flood prevention measures
- **House Bill 2687** - Includes \$45 million for disaster response during the flood, post-flood debris removal and small business assistance
- **House Bill 2878** – Provides \$5.6 million for repairs to flood-damaged roads and rails
- **House Bill 2765** – Includes \$12 million for housing assistance, water system upgrades, ag infrastructure repair, a flood warning system study, and an assessment of levy conditions

### ***. . . and Losses***

- **House Bill 3137** – Would have provided a three-year tax exemption for property owners who suffered substantial flood damage. This bill passed the House but died in the Senate.
- **House Bill 3138** – Would have provided a sales tax exemption on materials and labor for flood repairs. This bill died in the House.